

PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER

Attorney Docket No.: H-00-0896-U.1

To:

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Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of
INVENTOR(S): Roy R. HUTCHINSON, Jr.

ASSIGNEE:

FOR: "HULL AND GUNNEL PROTECTOR FOR USE WITH TROLLING MOTORS"

Enclosed are:

(XX) THREE (3) Sheets of Drawing Figures (FIGURES 1 - 4).

() An assignment of the invention to _____

() A certified copy of a _____ application.

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(XX) A verified statement to establish small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 37 CFR 1.27.

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January 31, 2000
Date


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APPLICATION FOR
U.S. LETTERS PATENT
FOR

"HULL AND GUNNEL PROTECTOR
FOR USE WITH TROLLING MOTORS"

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**"HULL AND GUNNEL PROTECTOR
FOR USE WITH TROLLING MOTORS"**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to trolling motor mountings and protectors and, more particularly, to a hull and gunnel protector for use with trolling motors wherein the protector includes a hinged panel to access a cushioned internal gunnel cavity. The cushioned
10 internal gunnel cavity is constructed and arranged to accommodate for a variety of geometrically shaped gunnels or gunwale.

2. General Background

Water vessels are typically propelled using an
15 outboard motor mounted to the transom. Outboard motors are available in a variety of horsepowers and are the primary means of transport to propel the water vessel long distances. However, the mechanical design of an outboard motor to accomplish such a feat renders the
20 outboard motor relatively loud. During fishing, the noise generated by an outboard motor is highly undesirable since the fish typically scatter about in the

presence of such noise.

Trolling motors have been designed to significantly eliminate the noise level disruptive to fish. The trolling motors are auxiliary motors which allow a fisherman to move relatively quietly and slowly along the coastline. Some boats are equipped with pre-installed trolling motors. For those boats which do not have pre-installed trolling motors and since the transom supports the outboard motor, trolling motors must be mounted over the gunnel or gunwale of the boat's hull. The impact forces exerted by the trolling motor's mounting clamp damages the gunnel or gunwale and the hull.

Several apparatuses have been patented which are aimed at transom protectors and outboard motor mountings.

U.S. Patent No. 4,271,548, issued to T.M. Alberts, entitled "MOTORBOAT TRANSOM PROTECTOR," discloses a transom protector comprising an inverted U-shaped flexible liner of laminated rubber to protect against a marine motor mounted thereon with a support clamp. The transom protector further comprises a base and a pair of legs mounted on the base for extending along the sides of the transom.

U.S. Patent No. 3,106,375, issued to R.L. Donaldson,
entitled "ADJUSTABLE OUTBOARD MOTOR MOUNTING," discloses
a motor mounting having front and rear mounting plates
and overlapping horizontal flanges, respectively, secured
5 by a fastener to the transom to protect it against a
motor mount bracket of the motor.

U.S. Patent No. 3,943,877, issued to K.C. Kemp,
entitled "OUTBOARD MOTOR MOUNTING SYSTEM," discloses a
protective mounting plate having front and rear mounting
10 plates secured to transom by screws to protect it against
the motor's mounting clamp.

U.S. Patent No. 3,025,028, issued to C.R. Corbin,
Jr., et al., entitled "OUTBOARD MOTOR SUPPORTING
BRACKET," discloses a mounting bracket or supporting
15 plate adapted to be mounted to the transom and having two
spaced recesses which are adapted to receive the clamping
screws of the motor mount support clamp.

Other patents representative of the state of the art
include U.S. Patent No. 4,524,942, issued to Kueny,
20 entitled "OUTBOARD MOTOR MOUNTING ASSEMBLY"; U.S. Patent
No. 2,815,731, issued to G. J. Curtis, entitled
"VERTICALLY ADJUSTABLE MOTOR MOUNT FOR OUTBOARD MOTORS";

U.S. Patent No. 2,713,842, issued to Plouff, entitled "OUTBOARD MOTOR MOUNT FOR DEPTH REGULATION"; and, Design Patent No. Des. 308,850, issued to McGuire, entitled "ADAPTOR PLATE FOR ATTACHING OUTBOARD MOTORS TO MOTOR SUPPORT BRACKETS," all of which are directed to outboard motor mounts.

U.S. Patent No. 5,312,077, issued to Gutierrez, entitled "MOUNTING DEVICE" discloses a U-shaped channel with a key.

As will be seen more fully below, the present invention is substantially different in structure, methodology and approach from that of the prior systems providing transom protection.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The preferred embodiment of the hull and gunnel protector for use with trolling motors of the present invention solves the aforementioned problems in a straight forward and simple manner.

Broadly, what is provided is a hull and gunnel protector for use with a motor comprising: a L-shaped member having a planar base and a planar side perpendicularly coupled, integrally, to one side of said

planar base; a hinged planar member hingedly coupled perpendicularly to the other side of said planar base; a first pad affixed to an interior side of said planar side along a bottom portion thereof; and, a second pad affixed to an interior side of said hinged planar member along a bottom portion thereof wherein an internal gunnel cavity is created between an upper portion of the planar side and the hinged planar member and the planar base for receipt of the hull's gunnel.

In view of the above, it is an object of the present invention to provided a hull and gunnel protector for use with trolling motors wherein the protector includes a hinged panel to access a cushioned internal gunnel cavity constructed and arranged to accommodate for a variety of geometrically shaped gunnels or gunwale.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a hull and gunnel protector having a first pad and a second pad wherein the first pad has a first thickness proportional to the width of the planar base and the second pad has a second thickness proportional to the width of said planar base wherein the first thickness and the second thickness together are less than the width

of the planar base to create a cushioned gap between the first pad and the second pad.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a hull and gunnel protector having a hinged planar member which is adapted to be rotated from and open position to a closed position. In the open position the hull's gunnel capable of being received in the internal gunnel cavity. In the closed position, the hull's gunnel is enclosed in the internal gunnel cavity and the hull's sidewall is sandwiched between the first pad and the second pad.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a hull and gunnel protector having a cushioned internal gunnel cavity defined the first, second and top pads. The cushioning properties of the pads serve to protect the hull and gunnel from clamping forces exerted by the trolling motor's mounting clamp.

In view of the above objects, it is a feature of the present invention to provide a hull and gunnel protector which is relatively simple structurally and thus simple to manufacturer.

Another feature of the present invention is to

provide a hull and gunnel protector which is simple to attach to the hull's gunnel such as for use in attaching and securing a trolling motor to the hull.

5 The above and other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the drawings, the description given herein, and the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

For a further understanding of the nature and objects of the present invention, reference should be had to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like parts are given like reference numerals and, wherein:

FIGURE 1 illustrates an end view of the hull and gunnel protector of the present invention attached to the hull and having a trolling motor mounted thereto;

FIGURE 2 illustrates an end view of the hull and gunnel protector of the present invention installed on a circularly-shaped gunnel;

FIGURE 3 illustrates a perspective view of the hull and gunnel protector of the present invention in a closed position; and,

FIGURE 4 illustrates a perspective view of the hull and gunnel protector of the present invention in an open position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings and in particular FIGURES 3-4, the hull and gunnel protector of the present invention is generally referenced by the numeral 10. The hull and gunnel protector 10 of the present invention comprises an inverted U-shaped cover or body member 20 having two parallel planar sides 25 and 26, one of which is a hinged panel rotatably coupled to move from an open position, as best seen in FIGURE 4, to a closed position, as best seen in FIGURE 3. More specifically, the inverted U-shaped member 20 is defined by a L-shaped member 21 having a planar base 22 and the planar side 25 perpendicularly coupled, integrally, to one side of the planar base 22. The planar side 26 is a hinged planar member hingedly coupled to the other side of the planar base 22 via hinge 30. Hinge 30 includes a pivot pin 35 which permits the planar side 26 to rotate between the open and closed positions.

The hull and gunnel protector 10 of the present invention further comprises a first side pad 41, a second side pad 43 and a top pad 45. The first side pad 41 is affixed to an interior side of the planar side 25 along

a bottom portion thereof. The second side pad 43 is affixed to an interior side of the hinged planar member or planar side 26 along a bottom portion thereof.

In most instance, the geometrical shape of the
5 gunnel 5 is not exactly centered about the top edge of the hull's sidewall 7. What is meant by centered is that an equal portion radiates inward and outward from the top edge of the hull's sidewall 7. Instead, a larger portion or longer length of the geometrical shape of a
10 variety of gunnels radiates or protrudes inward toward the center of the boat. Therefore, in the preferred embodiment, the first side pad 41 has a first thickness T1 (FIGURE 4) approximately one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the width W of the planar base 22. On the other hand, the second
15 side pad 43 has a second thickness T2 (FIGURE 4) less than the first thickness T1. Nevertheless, the first side pad 41 should have a first thickness T1 (FIGURE 4) proportional to the width W of planar base 22. Additionally, the second side pad 43 should have a second
20 thickness T2 (FIGURE 4) proportional to the width W of the planar base 22. However, the first thickness T1 and the second thickness T2 together are less than the width

W to create a cushioned gap 50 between the first side pad 41 and the second pad 43.

It should be noted that, the L-shaped member 21 and the hinged planar member or planar side 26 form a substantially inverted U-shaped cover 22. The first, second and top pads 41, 43 and 45 are arranged to create a cushioned internal gunnel cavity 60 dimensioned to accommodate therein a hull's gunnel 5, as best seen in FIGURES 1 and 2, and the cushioned gap 50 is dimensioned to accommodate therein a hull's sidewall 7. Thus, when the hull and gunnel protector 10 is used in combination with trolling motor 1, as best seen in FIGURE 1, the hull and gunnel are protected from the clamping forces exerted by clamp 2 used to mount the trolling motor 1 to the hull. In the preferred embodiment, the gunnel 5, when in the cushioned internal gunnel cavity 60, should not come in direct contact with the interior side of the upper portion of the planar sides 25 and 26, as best seen in FIGURE 2. Such contact may cause damage to the gunnel 5.

The hull and gunnel protector 10 is preferably used with trolling motors 1, as best seen in FIGURE 1. The hull and gunnel protector 10 includes a hinged panel to

access the cushioned internal gunnel cavity 60. The cushioned internal gunnel cavity 60 is constructed and arranged to accommodate for a variety of geometrically shaped gunnels or gunwale.

5 In operation, to install the hull and gunnel protector 10, the hinged planar member or planar side 26 is rotated to an open position and the hull's gunnel is received in the cushioned internal gunnel cavity 60. Thereafter, the hinged planar member or planar side 26 is
10 rotated to the closed position (FIGURE 3) to enclose the hull's gunnel 5 in the internal cavity 60. Furthermore, the hull's sidewall 7 is sandwiched between the first side pad 41 and the second side pad 43. Finally, the trolling motor 1 is capable of being mounted and clamped
15 via clamp 2 to the hull in a conventional manner with the hull and gunnel protector 10 protecting the hull's sidewall 7 and gunnel 5. By using hull and gunnel protector 10, the trolling motor 1 need not be clamped directly to gunnel 5 and hull's sidewall 7 and potential
20 damage thereto is avoided.

 The planar side 25 and the hinged planar member or planar side 26 should be made of a durable and strong